Summarised inspection findings

Grangemouth High School

Falkirk Council

28 February 2023

School Name: Grangemouth High School
Council: Falkirk Council
SEED number: 5746639
Roll: 824

Key contextual information

Grangemouth High School is a non-denominational six-year comprehensive school that serves the town of Grangemouth in east central Scotland. The majority of pupils come from the three primary schools situated in the town, with a few placing requests from other areas. The school has an Additional Support Centre (ASC), with capacity to support 36 young people with social and communication difficulties. The school has strong links with local industry and commerce and is often involved in partnership projects within the community. COVID-19 and the resulting disruption to school impacted significantly on families and young people in this community.

The senior leadership team comprises the headteacher, who has been in post for nine months, three depute headteachers, one of whom is in an acting position and a Resource Manager. There have been significant changes to the leadership team and to staffing across the school in recent times. At the time of the inspection visit young people in the senior phase were sitting prelim examinations.

Attendance is generally in line with the national average.

Exclusions are generally in line with the national average. There was an increase in exclusions in 2021/22.

In February 2022, 22.2 per cent of pupils were registered for free school meals.
In September 2021, 22.2 per cent of pupils live in 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland.
In September 2021 the school reported that 37 per cent of pupils had additional support needs.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory
This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are: ■ learning and engagement ■ quality of teaching ■ effective use of assessment ■ planning, tracking and monitoring	

■ In almost all classes, positive working relationships between young people and staff, and between young people, help create a calm and purposeful climate for learning. Young people value support offered by teachers within classes and beyond through, for example, digital communications and supported study to review aspects of learning.

■ Most young people are motivated and eager to learn. Young people engage fully with their learning when the environment is stimulating and creative. In a few areas of the school, young people are offered a range of contexts for learning, such as opportunities to work with peers. In a few departments young people lead aspects of their learning and demonstrate independent

learning skills well. In these departments young people investigate and complete research tasks, think creatively, and make decisions about how to present their work. This includes the use of effective digital platforms and tools. At times, lessons are overly teacher led which does not help young people take responsibility for their own learning. Staff should continue to consider how the learning environment and approaches to learning can be used to encourage young people to be more active participants in their learning.

■ Almost all teachers offer clear instructions and explanations of tasks. In most lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning and make links with prior learning. In a minority of lessons, teachers share what successful learning looks like. Teachers should ensure all learning is appropriately challenging, meaningful and well matched to the needs of individual young people. This remains an important area for improvement across the school.

■ The majority of young people use digital technology effectively to help with their classwork and as a study aid. All young people have their own tablet device and use it well to access course materials provided by teachers. Teachers encourage young people to share work or concerns with them through their digital devices. The use of digital technology has been developed well during periods of remote learning to enhance young people's learning experiences. Teachers provided regular purposeful feedback to their learners across the curriculum using digital technology.

■ The majority of teachers use assessments appropriately to assess young people's progress in learning. For example, most teachers use questions well to check young people's understanding or to check their retention of key information. The majority, however, are not yet using assessment information effectively to proactively plan next steps in learning for young people.

■ Young people value both written and verbal feedback from teachers which helps them understand how to make better progress in their learning. Learning conversations, between teachers and young people, are stronger in the senior phase. Young people in this phase of education, are supported well to identify their working and aspirational target grades confidently across their subjects. This helps them know what they need to do next to progress further in their learning. An important next step will be to develop this approach in the broad general education (BGE).

■ Teachers follow the local authority approach to plan, track, monitor and assess young people's progress across all subjects. This allows teachers to identify young people who are not making sufficient progress and provide additional support as required. For example staff re-visit or consolidate learning which helps young people progress. All teachers should ensure they use all information available to them to plan learning more effectively to support more young people to meet their aspirational grades.

■ All teachers have engaged in moderation activities making use of National Benchmarks in the BGE. As a result, they are developing confidence in their understanding of achievement of a level in the BGE. In the senior phase, almost all teachers undertake moderation activities within their subject areas. Senior leaders and teachers recognise that they would benefit from more opportunities for moderation across all areas and stages, building on previous experience during COVID-19 restrictions. As planned, this should include moderation activities across subjects and with other schools. Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) appointees should continue to play an important role in supporting improvements to moderation activities.

■ The school library is used well to support subject-based learning and young people in S6 who are studying out of class. The library also provides useful learning opportunities for young people who wish to volunteer as library assistants.

■ Senior leaders and staff welcome opportunities to reinstate regular quality assurance processes across the school. This can help senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning experiences for young people in all curricular areas. Rigorous evaluations of these experiences will help staff identify and share effective practice across the school. This should lead to more effective, high quality learning experiences for all young people.

■ The senior leadership team, in consultation with stakeholders, should review the learning and teaching policy as planned. Within this staff should collectively identify the features of high-quality teaching and learning within Grangemouth High School. This should lead to improved learning experiences for young people.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

■ The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy
- Staff recognise the need to improve attainment in literacy in order to improve young people's progress across the curriculum. A range of strategies and interventions have been introduced. These include; developing further the cluster literacy strategy which was halted because of COVID-19; catch-up programmes aimed at young people in S1, paired reading; an increasing focus on literacy as a responsibility of all across the school; a range of books in the library in a variety of languages; and developing a reading culture across the school.

- Attainment in numeracy is improving overall up to and including Scottish Credit Qualification Framework (SCQF) level 5. Teachers should now consider how to develop further confidence in young people's numeracy ability, through improved tracking, monitoring and learner conversations. This, along with a wider range of learner pathways, should enable young people to maximise awards at the highest level possible for them.

BGE
- Most young people achieved third level Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) or better in all literacy measures by the end of S3 in 2021/22. Half of young people attained fourth level CfE in listening and talking in 2021/22. Less than half attained fourth level CfE in reading and writing in the same year. In numeracy, by the end of the BGE, almost young people achieved third CfE level or better in 2021/22. Most attained fourth CfE level in 2021/22.

- Teacher's confidence in their professional judgements of achievement of a level is increasing. There is a need to reengage fully in moderation activities both within and outwith the school to ensure the reliability of these judgements. Staff should continue, as planned, to re-invigorate the cluster literacy strategy developed in 2019. This includes an increasing focus in literacy across the curriculum and continuing to develop the reading culture within the school.

Senior phase
Leavers
- Most young people leaving school between 2017/18 and 2020/21 achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy. This is in line with the virtual comparator (VC). Less than half of young people leaving school from 2016/17 to 2020/21 achieved SCQF level 6 in literacy. This is lower than the VC in 2019/20 and significantly lower than the VC in 2020/21.

- Most young people leaving school between 2018/19 and 2020/21 achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy. This is significantly much higher than the VC for each of these years. Performance at SCQF level 5 or better has shown a strong improvement over the last five

years. Less than half of young people leaving school from 2016/17 to 2020/21 achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy. This is generally in line with the VC.

■ Almost all leavers, who require additional support, left school in 2020/21 with both literacy and numeracy at SCQF level 4 or better. Most left with SCQF level 5 or better. The percentage of young people who left in 2020/21 with SCQF level 6 in literacy and in numeracy increased substantially from the previous year.

Cohorts
Literacy
■ At S4 the majority of young people attained SCQF level 5+ or better in literacy between 2019/20 and 2021/22, however this is below the VC in 2021/22. Performance at this level has been steady. By S5, based on the S4 roll, the majority attained SCQF level 5+ or better in 2020/21, improving to most young people in 2021/22. This is in line with the VC. Less than half of young people attained SCQF level 6+ or better in the five years from 2017/18 to 2021/22. This is below the VC in four of these years, and in line with the VC in 2018/19. By S6, based on the S4 roll, the majority of young people attained SCQF level 5+ or better in 2020/21. This was significantly higher than the VC in 2020/21, however is now in line with the VC. Less than half of young people attained SCQF level 6+ or better from 2019/20 to 2021/22. This is below the VC in the latest year.

Numeracy
■ At S4, most young people attained SCQF level 5+ or better in numeracy between 2017/18 and 2021/22. This is significantly much higher than the VC for each of the five years. By S5, based on the S4 roll, most young people attain SCQF level 5+ or better which is significantly much higher than the VC from 2018/19 to 2021/22. A minority attain SCQF level 6+ or better. By S6, based on the S4 roll, most young people attained SCQF level 5+ or better which is significantly much higher than the VC from 2019/20 to 2021/22.A minority attained SCQF level 6+ or better. This is in line with the VC.

Attainment over time
BGE
■ Teachers use the local authority system to record how young people are attaining across curricular areas in the BGE. This shows that in 2021/22 the majority of young people achieved fourth level CfE in science and technologies by the end of S3. Most young people achieve third level CfE in business education by the end of the BGE. The majority of young people achieve third level CfE by the end of S3 across creative and aesthetic subjects, social subjects and modern languages. Teachers need to continue to develop a greater understanding of national standards, particularly at fourth CfE level.

■ Senior leaders and principal teachers understand the need to continue to develop and refine their approach to tracking across the BGE. This will support them to monitor progress over time more effectively and identify where young people are making enough progress. Subsequently additional support can be targeted better at identified young people.

■ **Senior phase** At S4, the percentage of young people attaining one or more courses in 2021/22 was higher than the national average in mathematics, but significantly lower in languages other than English than the national average.

Improving attainment for all
■ Attainment of young people leaving school, using average complementary tariff points, has been largely consistent between 2017 and 2021. Attainment for the lowest attaining 20% of young people is in line with VC between 2017 and 2021, however was significantly higher than

the VC in 2018/19. For the middle attaining 60%, attainment is in line with the VC between 2017/18 and 2019/20 but was significantly lower than the VC in 2020/21. Attainment of the highest attaining 20% of young people was significantly much lower the VC in 2019/20 but is now in line with the VC. Teachers should continue as planned, to consider a variety of ways in which to improve the attainment of the middle attaining 60% of young people.

■ In S4, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20%, middle 60% and highest 20% of young people is in line with the VC, using average complementary tariff points. By S5, based on the S4 roll, this pattern continues, other than in 2020/21 when attainment for the highest attaining 20% of young people was significantly lower than the VC. By S6, based on the S4 roll, attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of young people is in line with the VC from 2017/18 to 2019/20 and again in 2021/22. It was significantly higher than the VC in 2020/21. The middle attaining 60% of young people attained in line with the VC from 2017/18 to 2021/22. The highest attaining 20% of young people attained in line with the VC in 2017/18, 2018/19 and in 2020/21 but significantly lower than the VC in 2019/20 and in 2021/22.

Breadth and Depth
■ At S4, the majority of young people attained six or more awards at SCQF level 4+ or better in 2017/18 to 2021/22. The majority of young people attained three or more awards at SCQF level 5C+ or better in 2021/22. This is in line with the VC. Only a minority achieved seven or more at SCQF level 5A+, in line with the VC from 2019/20 to 2021/22.

■ By S5, based on the S4 roll, the majority of young people attained four or more awards at SCQF level 5C+ or better in 2020/21. In 2021/22, young people achieved in line with the VC. A minority of young people attained four or more qualifications at SCQF level 6A+ or better, from 2017/18 to 2021/22, in line with the VC.

■ By S6, based on the S4 roll, the majority of young people attained five or more awards at SCQF level 5C+ or better from 2019/20 to 2021/22. This was above the VC in 2020/21. The majority of young people attained one or more award at SCQF level 6C+ from 2017/18 to 2021/22. In 2021/22, a minority attained three or more, or five or more qualifications at SCQF level 6A+ in 2021/22. This is significantly lower than the VC. A minority of young people achieve one or more awards at SCQF level 7C+ or better in 2020/21 and 2021/22. This is in line with the VC.

Overall quality of learners' achievement
■ Young people achieve well in Grangemouth High School. Young people feel valued and included by staffs' approaches to recognising and celebrating young people's achievements. This includes through awards ceremonies, pupil of the month awards and posts on social media platforms.

■ A majority of young people benefit from their involvement in the extensive range of clubs and activities across the school. By participating in these activities, young people develop leadership skills, build confidence and self-esteem. These clubs and activities also support young people develop fitness and teamwork in sport; socialise with their peers; improve their performing skills through being part of a musical performance or drama group; or learn through the Science Technology Enterprise Art and Maths (STEAM) club. Young people in S5 benefit from the youth philanthropy initiative which helps develop their knowledge of local charities as well as citizenship skills.

■ The Leadership Academy successfully supports young people to develop leadership skills. Young people are developing well their sense of responsibility, communication skills and are contributing to a culture of peer support. They are achieving these skills though their roles, for

example, as school captain; house prefects; buddies; and wellbeing and subject champions. Young people in the BGE also take on these roles willingly. Young people's leadership, volunteering and achievements are accredited through youth awards. Almost all young people in S6 are working towards achieving a Saltire award.

■ Senior leaders recognise the need to develop approaches to track young people's participation in achievement opportunities. This will help staff identify and address more effectively barriers to young people's achievement. The school's skills framework was designed to highlight the skills being developed by young people during classroom activities. Senior leaders recognise the need to review and refresh this framework and potentially use this when discussing skills developed through achievements. Most staff could support young people more effectively to articulate the skills they are developing.

Equity for all learners

■ Most staff have a clear understanding of the social, cultural and economic context of the school. Senior leaders target Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) appropriately to support improvements in young people's literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing. These are not yet always focussed specifically on improving outcomes for young people living in poverty. Staff use PEF well to support young people through the wellbeing hub, 'The Lighthouse'. Young people benefit from well-planned and targeted interventions such as counselling; nurture groups; bereavement support; and social and emotional individual and group work. This effective resource is resulting in improvements in young people's health and wellbeing.

■ Senior leaders created PEF commission posts recently, where staff lead on specific areas of targeted work. Senior leaders need to ensure outcomes are specific and measurable, and regularly reviewed. Staff need to articulate better how pupil equity funding is helping to accelerate the progress of young people living in poverty.

■ Staff support families well with the cost of the school day. Staff ensure that there are no financial barriers to young people accessing all aspects of the curriculum. All young people have easy access to, for example, toiletries, hygiene products, uniform, food and water bottles through the well-placed 'Everyday Essential' trolleys across the school.

■ The attainment of young people leaving school between 2018/19 and 2020/21 living in SIMD data zones 1 and 2 is in line with the VC, using average complementary tariff points. For young people leaving school in 2021 living in data zones 3 and 9 attainment is lower and significantly much lower than the VC respectively. For young people leaving school in 2020/21 and living in SIMD 5, attainment was significantly higher than the VC. Those living in SIMD 10 attained significantly much higher than the VC.

■ Almost all young people stayed at school from S4 to S5 in 2017/18, 2018/19 and in 2020/21. The majority of these young people stayed on to S6. They then leave school to higher or further education. A minority of young people leave for training or employment. Almost all young people move on to a positive destination on leaving school, however this is significantly lower than the VC in 2021/22.

Quality of provision of Special Unit (contributes to school evaluations)

Context

■ The Additional Support Centre (ASC) is a local authority provision located within Grangemouth High School. The ASC currently supports 33 young people from S1-S6. All young people experience social and communication difficulties. Most have a diagnosis of autism although this is not required for placement. The centre aims to promote and develop self-esteem, trust, social skills and resilience. Staff support most young people to attend mainstream classes and provide personalised and targeted group support within the ASC when required. A small number of young people have part-time placements. The spacious and well-resourced learning environment within the centre offers an accessible and supportive setting.

QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

■ Young people enjoy very positive relationships with staff and peers which contribute to a calm and purposeful learning environment. Young people show respect and consideration to one another and to staff and visitors to the ASC. Almost all respond well to the small classes and individual support provided within the ASC and mainstream classes. Most young people access mainstream classes alongside their mainstream peers. Almost all young people are motivated and engage well with learning activities, particularly when well-matched to their personal interests. Young people access a range of support and resources to develop skills for life and learning, including using digital technology.

■ In almost all lessons, tasks are well-matched to young people's needs and abilities through effective collaboration with subject teachers. This is helping to ensure that young people are supported to continue with the same work as their mainstream peers. Where this is most effective, young people develop their confidence and interpersonal skills through working together in pairs and groups. Young people demonstrate communication skills particularly well during outdoor learning and enterprise activities. Where appropriate, staff should provide more opportunities for young people to work collaboratively in mainstream classes. This will further support and develop young people's social and communication skills.

■ All young people in the ASC have a key teacher who supports and monitors their wellbeing and progress closely. Teachers and support staff from the ASC provide direct support both within the centre and in mainstream classes. This ensures that appropriate and consistent approaches are used to meet learners' needs within classes. As a result, almost all young people settle quickly and most feel able to engage in a range of subject classes. Mainstream teachers warmly welcome the quality of support and advice they receive from skilled and dedicated ASC staff. The ASC should continue to provide professional learning opportunities for mainstream staff to further develop their skills and confidence in meeting learner's needs.

■ In a few lessons, young people have opportunities to be active in their learning and to learn in different contexts. For example, young people in S2 worked with S6 numeracy tutors to improve their understanding of area and measurement. They measured inside and outdoor spaces. Young people in S2 and S3 are learning about managing money through their café enterprise project. Staff provide clear and helpful explanations and instructions during teaching which support learning. Teachers and support staff use questioning effectively to check for understanding and build on prior learning. Staff should ensure that young people are aware of learning intentions and success criteria in planning their lessons and check regularly for understanding.

■ Staff make effective use of a range of assessment information. This includes using standardised tests to ensure appropriate support for young people. Partner agencies provide

helpful advice and support to staff to help them to personalise learning appropriately. Staff check the impact and effectiveness of support at regular reviews of their progress. These reviews, in consultation with parents, ensure that all young people remain on track to achieve targets set within their individualised education programmes.

■ Young people's progress is tracked systematically through regular visits to classes and discussions with mainstream colleagues. Staff adapt young people's learning programmes when needed, to ensure that they maintain high levels of engagement and receive the right kind of help when they need it. Currently, subject teachers lead on assessing young people's progress within CfE. Staff would benefit from more opportunities to participate in moderation activities to improve their confidence and understanding of national standards.

QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

Attainment in literacy and numeracy
BGE
■ Most young people are making good progress in literacy and numeracy and a few are making very good progress from their starting points. Leaders should develop a clearer, strategic overview of BGE attainment in literacy and numeracy to identify notable improvements and areas where support is required.

■ Under half of young people in S1 and S2 have now achieved first level CfE in literacy and the majority are on track to achieve the second level CfE. A small number are attaining well within third level CfE, particularly in talking and listening. Young people at S3 are making good progress within the appropriate CfE levels.

■ In numeracy, almost all young people in S1 are making very good progress towards second level CfE. At S2 young people are making good progress within second level CfE and a small number are progressing well within aspects of third level CfE. Staff are developing a range of data to evidence progress. Staff in the ASC work closely with mathematics teachers to provide additional support classes for young people identified as having specific gaps in learning.

Senior phase
■ At the senior phase, all young people in S4 to S6 are working towards National Qualifications in English and mathematics. Under half of young people in S4 are making good progress towards achieving English at SCQF level 4. At S5 and S6, a few are making exceptional progress towards attaining SCQF levels 5 and 6. In mathematics currently, all young people at senior phase are making good progress towards SCQF level 3.

Attainment over time
■ Almost all young people at the senior phase achieved National Qualifications in an increasingly broad range of subjects from 2019/20 to 2021/22. These include English and mathematics at SCQF level 4 and 5. A small number of young people have made exceptional progress from starting points by achieving at least one SCQF level 6 qualification in an increasingly broad range of subjects. These include English, mathematics, music technology, design and manufacture, sciences and social subjects.

Overall quality of learners' achievement
■ Young people at all levels develop personal, social and life skills. Staff reintroduced wider achievement qualifications following COVID-19 restrictions. Young people in S1-S3 demonstrate skills in organising and managing outdoor equipment such as backpacks. They contribute well to a range of outdoor group tasks for John Muir and Personal Development

Awards. At the senior phase, young people undertake walking programmes and road safety awareness for the Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze Award. As planned, staff should continue to develop the variety of wider achievement awards for all young people.

Equity for all learners

- Staff in the ASC are improving outcomes for young people impacted by poverty. Staff provide breakfast and equipment to aid learning for young people, including digital technology. A few young people have made significant progress in reading because of the literacy intervention groups. All young people who are due to leave school are very well supported to move on to initial positive destinations. Young people are, for example, supported to participate in range of local work experience placements or to visit further education establishments. Staff in the ASC work closely with the Central Advocacy Services who visit young people prior to them leaving school and provide post-school support for young adults.

- Staff use PEF to provide well-targeted support for vulnerable young people and those who require additional support. This is encouraging young people to attend school and successfully closing gaps in their attainment because of absence. Staff encourage young people to express opinions and awareness of their rights and preferences by including their views in reviews of their progress and in lessons.

Practice worth sharing more widely

The work of the Additional Support Centre (ASC) to support young people.

Young people who attend the ASC are supported very well to attain and achieve. Almost all young people respond well to the small classes and individual support provided within ASC and mainstream classes. Most young people access mainstream classes alongside their mainstream peers.

Young people's progress is tracked systematically through regular visits to classes and discussions with colleagues. Staff adapt young people's learning programmes when needed, to ensure that they maintain high levels of engagement and receive the right kind of help when they need it. Young people at all levels benefit from a range of opportunities to develop personal, social and life skills.

Most young people make good progress in literacy and numeracy and a few make very good progress. Almost all young people at the senior phase achieve National Qualifications in an increasingly broad range of subjects.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.